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595 banner of Ghâzi-Mullah and Shamyl.[5] Before that time they were only "indif-
797 ferent disciples of Mohammed," as a report from the first half of the nineteenth century has it,[6] or "without any religion," as Güldenstädt pictured the situation in the 18th century.[7] In other words, the conversion of the Cherkess to Islamism was relatively recent, while polygyny is an old institution. It is beyond the least shadow of doubt that the Cherkess were not Mohammedans when Interiano visited them in 1502. Polygyny of the Cherkess certainly antedates the introduction of the *Šar'ia* (Islamic law) into Northwest Caucasia.

Passing over to the NORTHEASTERN CAUCASIANS, we find polygyny a recognized institution among them also. There can be no doubt about the practice existing among the *Chechens*;[8] in fact one of the Chechen tribes (Ingushi) seemed to make use of the right rather frequently. Grabovskij claimed that plurality of wives was of "very frequent" occurrence and that "many" Ingushi had two wives and occasionally three. Moreover, he goes so far as to say that this practice was not limited to the privileged families (as was the case with the Northwestern Caucasians), but that it was rather common to see a "pauper" with two wives.[9] Count Potocki had claimed, about a hundred years earlier, that some Ingushi had as many as five wives.[10]

Although the Chechens are Mohammedans, polygyny antedates their conversion to Islamism. According to Bašir Dalgat, a Chechen by birth, Islamism dates from the time when Chechen migrated to Ichkeria (16th century A. D.) and to the highlands (17th and 18th century). It was then that they lost contact with the Christian Georgians and fell into completely Islamic surroundings (the Daghestanians, Kumyks and Kabardians). Gradually the Chechens went over to Mohammedanism. One of the Chechen tribes, the Ingushi, living near the Georgian Military Road, the only agreeable road from Christian Georgia to Christian Russia, remained unsympathetic toward the new religion. As a counteraction against Islamic proselytism, Russian missionaries in the first half of the eighteenth century began a Christian revival among the Ingushi, resulting in a bitter struggle between Mohammedanism and Christianity. Finally in 1862 the Christian Cross had to give way to the ever-expanding Crescent.[11]

Almost a hundred years before the final submission of the Ingushi to Islamic law, Güldenstädt observed that they "marry several women, just as the Mohammedans do, but unlike the latter, they eat pork." Hence, though not yet fully Islamized, the Ingushi practiced polygamy.[12]

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[5] G. Zawadowski, "Les Musilmans du Caucase," *En Terre d'Islam*, XVIII (1943), No. 23, p. 162 f.

[6] J. A. Longworth, *A Year among the Cherkess*, I, p. 239.

[7] *Beschreibung der kaukasischen Länder*, p. 135. "Das Volk lebt ohne Religion" is not to be understood literally.

[8] G. Vertepov, "Inguši," *Terskij Sbornik*, II (1892), No. 2, p. 87.

[9] N. Grabovskij, "Ekonomičeskij i domašnij byt žitelej gorskago učastka Inguševskago okruga," SSKG, III (1870), p. 21.

[10] Count J. Potocki, *Voyage dans les steps d'Astrakhan et du Caucase*, II, p. 127.

[11] B. Dalgat, "Die alte Religion der Tschetschenen," *Anthropos*, III (1908), pp. 730 f. For the Islamization of the Chechens, see Vertepov, "Inguši," *Terskij Sbornik*, II (1892), No. 2, p. 87. Polidaev, *Gorcy severnago kavkaza*, p. 18.

[12] Güldenstädt, *Beschreibung der kaukasischen Länder*, p. 151.

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The *Lesghians*, who are geographically and linguistically related to the Chechens, likewise countenance polygamous marriages, but, here polygyny is a privilege that has always been reserved for a few. It is to be noted that these privileged personages seldom espouse more than two women.[13]

The largest and the most important people of the Lesghian group are the Avars. Speaking of these people, L'vov tells us expressly that only relatively few men can boast of two or at most three wives.[14]

The Lesghians were the first to be Islamized and their conversion was the most thorough. The Laks, for example, accepted the Koran as early as the 116th year of the hegira A. D. 777. By the end of the ninth century Mohammedanism was firmly rooted among the Daghestanian mountaineers.[15]

Hence, to discover the pre-Islamic condition of the Lesghians, we must go to the early Persian and Arabian writers. They inform us that when Islamism was introduced into Daghestan, the people were all followers of Zoroastrianism. These reports are confirmed by the fact that today there are still not a few traces of Avestic teaching in the Caucasus and in Daghestan in particular.[16] Attempts to Christianize the Daghestanians had been made at first by Armenian, Georgian, and Byzantine missionaries, then, in the thirteenth century by the Roman Catholic Church.[17] But in spite of all Christian missionary activity, pre-Islamic Daghestan must be classified as Avestic.

Polygyny is in full accord with Zoroastrianism, no less than with Mohammedanism, and therefore there is no reason why we should place plural marriages in the Mohammedan period and exclude them from Avestic times. Ahura Mazda Himself is supposed to have had a number of wives, and Zoroaster, his Prophet, according to tradition, had three. In fact, Avesta (Vend. iii. 3) actually encourages polygyny by teaching that in the household of the just, "both women and children abound" (Geiger, *Ostiranische*, pp. 244, 247). Polygyny was ex-

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[13] M. Kovalevskij, *Zakon*, II, p. 166.

[14] N. L'vov, "Domašnaja i semejnaja žizn dagestanskich gorcev avarskago plemeni," SSKG, III (1870), p. 20.

[15] For the Islamization of Daghestan see R. Erckert, *Der Kaukasus*, pp. 152—156; for the conversion of the Laks see Said Gabiev, "Laki, ich prolloe i byt," SMOMPK, XXXVI (1906), p. 14.

[16] Abû Ḥamîd el-Andalûsî writes about the Lesghians: "They have no religion, and pay no taxes. If a man dies they hand him over to men in houses under the earth, who cut up the members of the deceased, remove the flesh entirely from the bones, collect it together on one side, and give it to ravens to devour; they stand near with bows to keep off other birds from eating any of the flesh. If a woman dies they hand her over to other men (*var.* women) under the earth, who remove her bones, and give her flesh to vultures, while they stand by with knives to hinder other birds from approaching the flesh." Abû Ḥamîd el-Andalûsî is here referring to the Kubachi, a Dargwa-speaking people. J. Abercromby, *A Trip through the Eastern Caucasus*, p. 290. Of the Colchi Aelian writes in his *Historical Miscellanies*, iv. 1 (c. A. D. 200), "The Colkhi place their dead into skins and sew them up and then hang them up in trees." Both of these practices are traces of Zoroastrianism. "To bury a body," according to Sir Denison Ross, "would defile the pure earth, which is one of the gifts of Ahuramazda, and to burn it would defile his symbol, the Sacred Fire. Bodies are therefore exposed on towers (*dkhma*) specially constructed for the purpose, to be devoured by birds of prey." (Cited by Henry Field, *Contributions to the Anthropology of Iran*, Anthropological Series Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, December 15, 1939.)

[17] J. F. Baddeley, *op. cit.*, II, p. 39.

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Byzantia (iv. 4) establish the existence of endogamy in Armenia, while the present-day local endogamy of Svanetia may very well be a vestige of former in-breeding.[71]

There are two facts which we can deduce from the existence of endogamy in Georgia and Armenia. First of all, we are justified in looking for a *common* source of endogamy for Georgia, Armenia, and Daghestan. Secondly, we are justified in looking for this source in *pre-Christian* times, that is, before the Christianization of Georgia in the fourth century.

The origin of endogamy in all three countries must, as it seems, be sought in Iran.[72] Endogamy among the peoples of Daghestan is a survival of the ancient Avestic religion, which the Mohammedan missionaries had to combat when they came to spread the teaching of the Prophet.

In the Mazdaic creed (*Yasna* xii. 9) we find the *xvaêtvadatha* (Pahlavi *xvêtôkdas*) as an obligation. Originally the *xvaêtvadatha* ("next-of-kin marriage") aimed at preserving the purity of blood of the Iranian nobility, which was numerically weak and could be perpetuated only by in-breeding. The priests formed, in much the same way, a distinct class and cooperated with the nobility in fostering endogamous marriages. Once the custom had been firmly established, it was not difficult to attribute it to Ahura Mazda Himself and to His Prophet Zarathustra.[73]

That the *xvaêtvadatha* was an important doctrine cannot be denied and hence this all-important teaching could not have been disregarded when the Avesta was introduced into the Caucasus. It must have been taught to the converts and accepted by them, for the *xvaêtvadatha* is one of the surest marks of genuine piety in the coming days of evil; by it mortal sin is expiated; it is a bulwark against the attacks of the demons; it is the second of the seven good works; it is the ninth of the thirty-three ways of entering heaven; and lastly, Zarathustra is supposed to have prescribed it as the eighth of his ten admonitions to mankind and declared it meritorious. In fact the next-of-kin marriage is supposed to be the source of "complete progress in the world... even unto the time of the renovation of the universe." (*Dâtistân-î Dînîk* lxxvii. 6 f).[74]

If we wish to delve deeper into the history of Caucasian endogamy, we must first face a very difficult problem, a task which in fact we shall have to leave to specialists. The problem regarding the origin of next-of-kin marriages in Avestic Iran itself is controverted. Some believe it is genuinely Persian while others maintain that its ultimate source is a non-Indo-European people (perhaps of Magian origin and therefore neither Indo-European nor Semitic).[75]

That endogamy should survive in Daghestan and disappear in Georgia and Armenia is not to be wondered at. Christianization of the two latter countries was incomparably more thorough than the Islamization of the Lesghian mountain peoples.

[71] Cf. Wesendonk, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
[72] Here we fully agree with M. Kovalevskij, *Zakon*, I, p. 89.
[73] Cf. L. H. Gray, "Marriage (Iranian)," *Hasting Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 458.
[74] Cf. L. H. Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 457.
[75] L. H. Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 458.